



March 24, 2009

Dear Members of the House Energy and Technology Committee,

On behalf of Clean Water Action's over 200,000 Michigan members, I urge you to support strong consumer protections that protect vulnerable populations in this state.

Clean Water Action supports proposed legislation that creates shut-off notice requirements, procedures and fines (House Bills: 4390, 4391, 4660, 4387, 4388, 4661, 4655, 4659, 4658, 4638) and that removes barriers to access for bill assistance programs and for information regarding service restoration (House Bills 4392, 4662, 4657, 4649, 4650, 4385, 4388). These important protections must be implemented. However, these proposals do not adequately protect Michigan's most vulnerable residents.

Chairman Mayes and Representative Scripps have proposed legislation that would further protect utility customers (including municipal) by prohibiting shut-off during winter months (House Bills 4673, 4656, and 4384). Clean Water Action supports these protections for all customers, but urges Members to consider stronger prohibitions against shut-offs.

Michigan must not let vulnerable citizens, including seniors, people with disabilities, and low- or no-income householders, be exposed to dangerous weather conditions by complete energy shut-off for bill non-payment. Many persons require power during extremely hot days, and, as climate change continues to increase the amount of 90-100 degree days in this state, we must not limit shut-off protections to winter months. Though it is not currently before this Committee, I would also ask Members to support legislation that protects Michigan residents against home foreclosures due to utility bill non-payment.

As the bi-partisan bill sponsorship for much of this first round of consumer protection legislation suggests, these issues are at the forefront of constituent concerns. Michigan has a responsibility to regulate utilities for the public good. Notice requirements and assistance programs are very laudable, but protections for vulnerable citizens from shut-offs and homeowners from foreclosures for utility bill non-payment are also imperative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Harley", is written over a horizontal line.

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